

Michigan
Department
of Human
Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394

*DHS cited in stories

Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, October 16, 2008

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

Subject	Page
Abuse-neglect*	2-8
Children's Rights agreement	9
Domestic violence	10
Food Stamp Challenge*	11-15
Poverty	16
State budget/unemployment	17-19
News release*	20-22



October 16, 2008

New twist in abandonment of 13-year-old in Nebraska

Prosecutor's office files a neglect petition against Southfield family

BY MEGHA SATYANARAYANA and GINA DAMRON
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

The Oakland County Prosecutor's Office has filed a neglect petition against the Southfield family of the 13-year-old boy whose mother drove to Nebraska to abandon him under that state's expansive and controversial safe haven law.

The filing was not released for public review before Oakland County Circuit Court closed for the day, but a hearing was scheduled for 2:30 p.m. today, deputy court administrator Lisa Langton said.

While the mother is protected by Nebraska law, she could face charges in Michigan, where she and her husband have four other children. And local authorities and court records say the family already was being investigated before the teen was taken to Nebraska.

The case also is causing a rift between social services and law enforcement.

Southfield Police Chief Joseph Thomas Jr. said he and county Prosecutor David Gorcyca were upset that the Michigan Department of Human Services did not involve them immediately in a case where a child was taken across state lines.

The Free Press is not identifying the teen because he is a minor and it is not identifying the mother because no charges have been filed against her.

The mother is still in the Omaha area where she faces an Oct. 27 hearing regarding reunification.

The DHS attempted to contact the father regarding the other children, but Southfield police said the DHS was unsuccessful.

The 12-hour journey ended about 1:30 a.m. Monday, after the mother, an aunt and a grandmother drove the child from Michigan to Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, where he was left with luggage, extra clothes and \$10.

Nebraska's safe haven law allows a child up to age 18 to be left at a hospital without fear of prosecution.

The boy told police his mother was stressed out and couldn't deal with him anymore. He also she was trying to teach him a lesson. She has expressed remorse to Nebraska officials.

As a student in Southfield Public Schools, the teen is "not a student with a bad profile," and wasn't known to be having difficulties according to Ken Siver, deputy superintendent.

But the family has files with both social services and law enforcement in Wayne and Oakland counties.

According to court records, in 2003, a neglect petition filed in Wayne County on behalf of the boy was denied. He also was prescribed mental health services for a delinquency charge in 2007.

In Southfield, both he and a sibling have open delinquency files, Thomas said.

A private agency tasked with placing the 13-year-old with relatives during a complaint "expressed concern about this child's safety and remaining in the family in any way," said Janet Snyder, executive director for Michigan Federation for Children and Families, a child-serving agency advocacy group.

Contact **MEGHA SATYANARAYANA** at 313-223-4544 or megha@freepress.com. Chastity Pratt Dawsey and Lori Higgins contributed to this report.



Thursday, October 16, 2008

Abandoned boy's father resists state checks

Man will not let state health worker observe siblings of a 13-year-old left at Nebraska hospital.

Francis X. Donnelly / The Detroit News

The father of a 13-year-old Southfield boy abandoned in Nebraska has refused to allow a state health worker to check on the welfare of the child's siblings.

The father refused to allow the Michigan Department of Human Services worker inside the home Tuesday or tell him where the children were, said Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca.

Gorcyca is seeking information about the family from the Michigan agency as he contemplates going to court to force the father to produce the children.

"I don't know anything about these kids," Gorcyca said. "Nothing."

The prosecutor said the family had several interactions with the human services agency before the abandonment, but wasn't sure whether they involved the 13-year-old boy.

He believes the family has three other children, ages 3, 5, and 16.

Meanwhile, the boy's great-grandmother said the family had tried other ways to deal with his unruliness before taking him to Nebraska on Monday.

Nebraska has a state law that allows children to be surrendered to hospitals without the parents being charged with abandonment.

Mary Scruggs of Detroit said her great-grandson had been taken to Michigan agencies for his bad behavior, but she wasn't sure which places.

The boy had been caught stealing from neighborhood stores and was disruptive in school, she said.

He was adopted by his parents when he was 3, she said.

Scruggs said she wasn't sure that abandoning the child was the answer.

"I felt bad," she said. "Something else could have been done."

The boy is being held at an emergency shelter in Omaha, Neb., and will be temporarily placed in a foster home.

His mother apparently had second thoughts about surrendering her son, but will have to wait for an Oct. 27 court hearing in Omaha to determine whether she can have him back.

The hearing, which will probe the fitness of the parents, could lead to the return of the child to the family, or he could be placed in a foster home in Michigan.

The boy's grandmother and aunt accompanied him and his mom on the 12-hour, 700-mile drive to Nebraska, where they left him alone at a hospital with luggage, extra clothes and \$10, and his mother told him, "Just do what you have to do," authorities said.

You can reach Francis X. Donnelly at (313) 223-4186 or fdonnelly@detnews.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081016/METRO/810160405>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.



Official: Michigan mom neglected boy she left in Nebraska

Posted by Associated Press October 16, 2008 13:50PM

PREVIOUSLY

- [Michigan mother, son not alone on trip to Omaha](#)

PONTIAC -- A county prosecutor's office in Michigan is filing a neglect petition against the parents of a 13-year-old boy whose mother drove to Nebraska to abandon him at a hospital this week under that state's unique safe-haven law.

Oakland County Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Deborah Carley said a hearing would be held Thursday afternoon in juvenile court. The petition seeks temporary custody of the children of Terri and Terrance Martin of Southfield.

The filing partly is based on the actions of Terri Martin, who took the boy to Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, Carley said.

She called the trip a "symptom" of wider neglect against the child and possibly his four siblings.

The boy is the second teenager from outside Nebraska and 18th child overall abandoned in the state since the law took effect in July. Nebraska's law allows anyone to leave a child as old as 18 at a state-licensed hospital without fear of prosecution for the abandonment.

Carley was not immediately aware if the Martins had a lawyer.

She declined to offer details of alleged neglect, but said it was "significant" and should have been dealt with by the Michigan Department of Human Services.

"There were a lot of warning signs here for the DHS -- they should have taken some action prior to this," she said. "There were enough things happening that indicated these children were not safe and were not in the best home for them."

Department spokesman Edward Woods III said the state has worked with the prosecutor's office so it could file the petition. He declined to discuss specifics of the case, but said he's unaware of any incident where the children's safety had been compromised by his department.

"There are certain steps and procedures that must be followed when it comes to ensuring the safety of children," Woods said. "It is our responsibility to make sure we follow those steps to ensure a successful outcome through the court system, but most importantly for the safety of the child."

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Abandoned Teen: The Family Issues

News 7 WXYZ Detroit Last Update: 10/15 10:42 pm



The Southfield family of the teen a mother abandoned in Nebraska is well known to law enforcement because of problems in the past.

SEE ACTION NEWS REPORT AT http://www.wxyz.com/news/story.aspx?content_id=dc3ba138-2454-4fe6-ba3c-53031756ae4c

The family has had significant interaction with the Department of Human Services.

Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca is concerned about the other kids living in the home with the mom that abandoned one of her teens.

Gorcyca says there is three-year-old, five-year-old and a 16-year-old.

The children's father has been reluctant to help DHS.

The county prosecutor wants to take the kids into custody to ensure they're being properly cared for.

DHS doesn't seem to believe the current situation is an emergency, so there's been no hearing as Gorcyca has requested.

The Southfield Chief of Police also wants answers. He wants to know if there was abuse or neglect.

No crime was committed by the mom in Nebraska. That was legal.

But they want to find out if there was any abuse or neglect going on at the home in Southfield.



Powered by Clickability

Safe Haven Costs

Posted: 9:21 PM Oct 15, 2008

Last Updated: 5:31 AM Oct 16, 2008

Reporter: Maniko Barthelemy

Email Address: sixonline@wowt.com

[Safe Haven Foster Care Costs](#)

A Safe Haven law is supposed to be a way to protect newborns when a helpless mother feels like she's out of options. Nebraska's Safe Haven Law, however redefines the traditional meaning. The State's Safe Haven law has become a safety net for parents in and out of the state having problems raising their children. Since July when the law went into effect, 18 children have been dropped off at area hospitals, the youngest one-year-old and the oldest 17 [A](#) | [A](#) | [A](#)

The law now, allows for any child, even an 18-year-old to be dropped off, no questions asked. Omaha resident Dick Robison believes without question, state lawmakers made a mistake. "Obviously it's gone in a direction they did not intend and they need to remedy that and fix it," Robison said.

Fixing it now would require a special session. Channel Six News is in the process of surveying state senators. A clear majority of those who've responded so far, give the idea of a special session a thumbs down. Some cite the high cost, especially since the regular session is less than three months away. ☐

Voices for Children in Nebraska, an organization that compiles annually statistics on the well-being of children in Nebraska agrees with lawmakers. "We don't see a quick fix to this. We don't support changing the age quickly, unless we address the underlying problems," said Sarah Ann Lewis of Voices for Children in Nebraska.

So what is the law costing taxpayers? In a crude analysis of a 2007 Annual Report from The Nebraska Foster Care Review Board, Channel Six found on average, Nebraska spends about \$2,200 a month per child in foster care. When you add the 17 Safe Haven Children and multiply that number by \$2,200 the amount per month to provide care for those children so far is costing nearly \$39,000 per month. It's half the cost of a special session.

Eric Schneider an Omaha resident believes there's no way to put a price tag on the children's well-being. "I'm not so worried about the cost of the children as what's right for the children. If these parents are dumping off their kids, it's probably better for them not to be in that situation but I don't know, I don't know what the answer is," Schneider said.

A protest against the Safe Haven law scheduled tomorrow night near Creighton University Medical Center, where many children have been left.

Find this article at:

<http://www.wowt.com/news/headlines/31084104.html>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



October 16, 2008

Jim Paparella: Settlement spells hope for Michigan's kids in need

Long-overdue reforms coming for state care

Optimism for a vastly improved child welfare system in Michigan is at an all-time high. Oddly enough, it's due to a lawsuit. In 2006, the national advocacy group Children's Rights filed suit on behalf of the approximately 19,000 abused and neglected children in the custody of the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS).

A settlement agreement reached by both parties in July 2008 spells out remedies long overdue for a system that has suffered from its own neglect. In effect, the settlement agreement demands that Michigan devote appropriate attention and resources to fulfill its responsibilities to children in foster care.

The settlement resulted from many long months of hard work and was accelerated by newly appointed DHS officials who came aboard last fall. Refreshing from the perspective of private nonprofit agencies in Michigan is the crystal clear vision, direction, and open-mindedness demonstrated by the new leadership. Over the past year, a strong sense of mutual respect and trust has been cultivated between the public and private services sectors, providing the sound foundation that will be needed to implement the major reforms called for in the settlement.

Equally positive is the selection of an independent Monitoring Team assigned to oversee the five-year settlement implementation and 18-month follow-up. The team brings to Michigan a wealth of hands-on experience in system reform in other states and insights that will mean Michigan can avoid known pitfalls and move toward success more quickly.

In brief, the settlement calls for a shift in DHS organizational structure that elevates and consolidates children's services, increased child welfare worker and supervisor qualifications and training, reduced caseload sizes and supervisor-to-worker ratios, licensing of relative foster care providers, effective recruitment of foster and adoptive families, permanency planning for all children in care, services for youth transitioning to adulthood, improved assessment and mental health services, greater attention to the special needs of children, and team decision making.

Success is going to take every ounce of energy and expertise of every partner in this endeavor: state legislators, state policymakers, state and local DHS administrators and workers, contracted private nonprofit agency employees, boards, volunteers and community leaders, university Schools of Social Work, foundations and more.

The single largest challenge, however, may be securing the financial resources needed to actuate change. No matter what the economic outlook in this state, the Michigan Legislature must address what will be, minimally, annual requests for funding "to effect the provisions and outcome measures set forth in this Settlement Agreement ..." Cutting caseloads in half, lowering supervisory ratios and training and retaining qualified and quality staff must be accomplished quickly in order to achieve any level of success.

The goals are defined. The task is monumental. Failure is not an option.



Abuse victims tell their stories

Posted by Krystle Dunham | For the Jackson Citizen Patriot October 16, 2008 08:22AM

She was hit so hard by her former husband that she lost vision for six weeks, a Jackson woman told an audience Wednesday at a dinner sponsored by a local shelter for domestic violence victims.

"I'm here for every woman in the shelter," the woman, 45, said during Wednesday night's AWARE Inc. Phenomenal Women Dinner.

She and four other speakers told their domestic violence survivor stories.

The 45-year-old woman, who is not being named by the Citizen Patriot because her ex-husband was not convicted of any of the alleged assaults, said the beating that temporarily robbed her of her vision caused so much bleeding in her head that doctors told her she could only lie down on one side when sleeping.

The Jackson woman said the AWARE shelter helped make her a survivor. She described the shelter as "a wonderful place."

"It was like a week in Florida to me," she said of her stay there.

She said she hopes she can help other domestic violence victims get help.

About 100 people attended Wednesday's free event at the Arbor Hills Golf Club.

AWARE Inc., with offices at 706 W. Michigan Ave., provides emergency shelter, legal advocacy, crisis intervention counseling, forensic nurse examinations and transitional housing to survivors of domestic or sexual abuse.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Accepting a challenge shows people how poverty affects a community

Posted by Gus Burns | The Saginaw News October 16, 2008 07:43AM

Tina Silva, 31, nervously spoke to more than 30 people at the East Side Soup Kitchen, 940 E. Genesee, about her ongoing struggle with poverty.

Never mind her nerves; she received a standing ovation.

"I had some troubles in my life, and today, I'm happy and healthy and have my children in my life," said Silva, 31, of Saginaw Township.

With an infant, she said the state aid she gets with providing formula means she can stretch her budget, and the training she gets puts her on track to someday get off assistance.'

But, she said, her road is long and tough.

A long-time recipient of public assistance, Saginaw County Department of Human Services officials consider Silva a success and chose her to speak at the "Food Stamp Challenge and Poverty Summit Media Roundtable."

Recently hired as a server at Applebee's, 5940 State, Silva is optimistic. She gives the credit to the Saginaw Jobs, Education and Training Program for her job. Workers there assisted Silva with a task entirely foreign to her: Creating a resume.

Any citizen receiving cash assistance is required to attend training, which assists students with resume and interview preparation, as well as providing refresher courses on math, reading and science.

"There's things you have to do to receive that cash. They're not going to make it easy for you," Silva said.

Silva said the classes motivate half the people to go out and get a job, and the other half eventually drop out and stop receiving assistance.

Randy Barst, director of the Saginaw County Department of Human Services, said 6,713 Michigan families receive cash assistance, 36,639 people receive food subsidies, 41,069 people are on Medicaid and 3,620 parents receive daycare subsidies. Barst said the county spends nearly \$43.2 million annually on food assistance

"About 300 people signed up for the food stamp challenge all over Michigan," said Gisgie Gendreau, director of public relations for Michigan Department of Human Services. "I have my lunchbox in my car to prove that I am also on the food stamp challenge."

Gendreau said participants were asked to spend no more than \$29.35, from Oct. 13 through Oct. 17, to illustrate the tight food budget of food assistance recipients.

Barst said the goal was to impress upon the public the importance of donating -- money and time -- to food banks and

Voices for Action

What: Voices for Action Poverty Summit on Thursday, Nov. 13, at Cobo Hall in Detroit.

Why: The summit, with lectures and workshops, allows community leaders to interact with the citizens who receive assistance. Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm and Martin L. King III will speak.

To participate: The Saginaw County Community Action Committee is offering free transportation and meals for those who wish to attend.

Reservations: Due Friday at 753-774.

Information: michigan.gov/poverty

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Take the governor's food stamp challenge

By [Dave Kinchen](#)

Wednesday, October 15, 2008 at 6:34 p.m.

Times are tough across the country and in Michigan more than a million residents are living on food stamps. In an effort to spread awareness for those in need, Governor Jennifer Granholm has issued a week long challenge.

Try living on just under 6 dollars a day! NBC25 went to the Meijer store in Davison township to see how much food a family of four could buy with just \$5.87 a day per person. That equals a little more than \$164 dollars a week.

The journey began with some healthy items- a few apples and a pear. Protein is important, so we picked up some turkey and other dinner meats. There was a great deal on smoked ham and turkey cold slices.

Dairy products were also on the menu. That include milk, eggs, and we checked them to make sure they were in good shape. For a light breakfast, we selected some yogurt as well. We found a deal where you could get six yogurt selections for \$6!

Also on the list, orange juice, a couple types of cereal, a few health snacks and baby food. The grand total was \$71.51. That is just a sample of what it would take to feed a family of four, for a week on assistance.

More than 300 people statewide have accepted Governor Jennifer Granholm's challenge, including the governor herself.

Note: see video at http://www.weyi.com/news/news_story.aspx?id=207607

Governor, others to practice bargain shopping

Wednesday, October 15, 2008 | 8:16 PM

Effort designed to show difficulties of Food Assistance Program



By Rebecca Trylch

LANSING (WJRT) -- (10/15/08)--This week Gov. Jennifer Granholm and other state residents are learning how to bargain shop like a family on a budget has to every day.

It's all part of the Michigan Food Stamp Challenge. It's an effort to shed some light on how difficult it can be to feed a family using the state's Food Assistance Program.

This challenge is meant to be an eye-opening experience.

That's why the Department of Human Services is asking people to try and buy groceries based on the average amount of money the state provides for families who get assistance.

Note: see video at <http://abclocal.go.com/wjrt/story?section=news/local&id=6451345>



Food Stamp Challenge: Survive on \$5.87 a day

Thursday, October 16, 2008

By Kyla King

The Grand Rapids Press

If Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm can eat like a food-stamp recipient this week to raise awareness about poverty, so can you.

That was the message from state and local officials who held a local kick-off Wednesday in Grand Rapids for the Michigan Food Stamp Challenge.

The event, held at South End Community Outreach Ministries, highlighted the statewide push to focus on the effects of poverty and preview a Nov. 13 summit on the issue at Cobo Center in Detroit.

"What we're going to do is try and live on \$5.87 a day," said Michigan Department of Human Services director Ismael Ahmed, who took part in the Grand Rapids event. "It won't make us poor people, but it will help us dramatize the need for food in Michigan."

Ahmed is among the 300 state and local leaders who have pledged to live on the equivalent of food stamps for five days.

That includes Granholm, who said she took her son shopping Sunday at a Meijer store. They could only spend \$5.87 per day, per person.

She said she bought a lot of macaroni and cheese.

More than 1.3 million state residents receive food stamps. The state hopes the challenge will raise awareness and boost donations to support nine regional food banks.

--The Associated Press contributed to this story.

©2008

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Blog Action Day 08



What is Blog Action Day?

Today thousands of bloggers will unite to discuss a single issue - poverty. We aim to raise awareness, initiate action and to shake the web!

Learn More: <http://blogactionday.org/>



MICHIGAN REPORT

The Capitol Record Since 1906

REPORT NO. 200, VOLUME 47-- WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15 2008

BUDGET UNCERTAINTIES, BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE, GROW

State officials presume some budget cuts will be needed for the 2008-09 fiscal year, and apparently have informally told department directors to begin thinking about what could be cut, sources said. But at the same time, there are some indications the 2008-09 may get more help from book closing and from Congress that could mitigate the need for cuts.

Because revenues for the 2007-08 fiscal year may be better than earlier indicated, the state may see a larger carry-forward than initially expected, sources said.

Unless the carry-forward from last fiscal year is unusually large, and at this point officials do not anticipate that, cuts could still be in the offing during 2008-09, officials said. But then there is the possibility of Congress passing a second economic stimulus bill.

While the first economic stimulus bill passed this past spring was aimed at consumers, a new bill is anticipated to be geared more towards state and local governments, which state officials hope could potentially provide enough additional revenues to block the need for any budget cuts. Still, state sources, speaking on background, confirmed that top state fiscal and budget officials have informally asked department directors to start thinking about what areas could be cut if an executive order is issued.

Because it seems clear the U.S. economy is headed towards recession, officials presume the state will see revenues fall below the estimates that were adopted last spring. That is before any potential effects from tax cuts that legislators have called for the state to enact. Legislative Republicans have been pushing for the state to enact a three-year phase-out of the surcharge on the Michigan Business Tax.

Senate [Majority Leader Mike Bishop](#) (R-Rochester) again on Wednesday accused House Democrats of stonewalling action on legislation that would phase out the surcharge, as well as refusing to send to the Senate a measure enacting potential property tax cuts.

The discussion about potential budget cuts remains informal at this point because there is no hard evidence that state revenues have or will decline, sources said.

October revenues will accrue back to the 2007-08 fiscal year, which technically ended on September 30.

So far, there are no indications that October revenues are falling below projections, the sources said, even with national evidence that retail sales are slumping.

Until there is an official indication that revenues have fallen or are likely to fall below projections, the state cannot take action to cut the budget. Such an indication will not come without a revenue projection issued by the Revenue Estimating Conference.

The conference is now scheduled to meet in January, as it does every year, when the first quarter of the fiscal year has been completed.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, [Governor Jennifer Granholm](#) said that she might call for an earlier revenue estimating conference.

Technically, another meeting can only be called by one of the three members of the conference - State Treasurer Robert Kleine, House Fiscal Agency Director Mitch Bean or Senate Fiscal Agency Director Gary Olson - but if an earlier meeting were called it is unlikely to occur until either late November or early December.

Critical to the revenue projections the state agencies will make are projections the Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics at the University of Michigan will make at its annual fall seminar, this year scheduled for November 20 and 21.

Sources said they are constantly hearing from different groups worried about rumors about budget cuts, some even citing specific amounts or percentages that may be cut.

But there is nothing concrete, the sources said, just presumptions at this point.

However, officials do hope that the state will see more money carry over into the current fiscal year when the books on the 2007-08 fiscal year are completed.

Already included in projections for the fiscal year is a carry forward of \$139.4 million from the 2007-08 year. But 2008 revenues have so far come in above projections and that leads to hope of a bigger carry forward.

None of the sources expect such an increase to be monumental in size, but any increase in the expected amount will help offset the need for executive order budget cuts, they said. And, the state is hopeful Congress will enact and President George W. Bush will sign a new fiscal stimulus bill.

If revenues the state receives from such a stimulus bill were large enough, they could be combined with a larger carry forward to block the need for budget cuts, sources said.

STATE JOBLESS RATE DIPS SLIGHTLY

Michigan's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dropped two-tenths of a percentage point last month to 8.7 percent, but it is still significantly above the national average.

The Department of Labor and Economic Growth also reported Wednesday that Michigan's September 2008 jobless rate was 1.4 percentage points above September 2007's rate of 7.3 percent.

The decline is because of a decrease in the number of individuals in the state's work force, Rick Waclawek, director of DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, said. The state's labor force fell by 19,000 as both employment and unemployment declined over the month.

"The September labor force and job data were collected mid-month, prior to the worsening of the national financial crisis," Mr. Waclawek said.

Currently, about 4.9 million people make up the job market in the state of Michigan, down from about 5 million in September 2007. About 4.5 million of those people are employed, and nearly 450,000 people are unemployed. One year ago, 4.6 million were employed, and 366,000 unemployed.

Since September 2007, Michigan's number of unemployed people increased by 17.2 percent or 63,000.

The national jobless rate did not change in September at 6.1 percent.

The unemployment rate also decreased in the Detroit-Warren-Livonia metropolitan area, down 1.5 percentage points to 8.5 percent unemployed.

Seasonally adjusted Michigan payroll jobs also fell in September by 28,000 to a total of approximately 4.1 million.

There were 7,000 fewer manufacturing jobs in the state, but education and health services saw 2,000 more jobs in the month. Since last year, payroll jobs have fallen 78,000 or 1.8 percent in the state.

Michigan Department of Human Services Media Advisory

Thurs., Oct. 16, 2008

Contact: Edward Woods III, director of communications, (517) 373-7394 or (517) 927-1884

Food Stamp Challenge kicks off in Benton Harbor

WHAT: Food Stamp Challenge Kick-off

More than 1.3 million Michigan residents receive food assistance to help supplement their food budgets. The Food Stamp Challenge encourages people to experience what life is like for five days living on the average Michigan food benefit of \$29.35 for the five days, or just less than \$2 per meal.

By partnering with the Michigan Food Bank Council, the challenge promotes the Michigan Harvest Gathering and the upcoming Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit. Policymakers, low-income residents and service providers from across the state will gather at Cobo Center in Detroit for the summit on Nov. 13. Together they will look for ways to ensure that as Michigan's economy recovers, our poorest citizens are not left behind.

WHERE:

Benton Harbor Salvation Army
Auditorium
233 Michigan
Benton Harbor, MI 49022

WHEN:

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Fri., Oct. 17, 2008

WHO:

Ismael Ahmed, director, Michigan Department of Human Services.
Jerry Franks, director, Berrien County Department of Human Services.
Art Fenwick, executive director, Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency.
Todd Gustafson, executive director, Michigan Works! For Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties.

For more information, please consult the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs or www.michigan.gov/poverty, click on Food Stamp Challenge.

Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Edward Woods III, director of communications, (517) 373-7394 or (517) 927-1884

DHS director invites Saginaw residents to take Michigan Food Stamp Challenge, donate to local food banks

Event highlights the Michigan Harvest Gathering and Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit

Oct. 15, 2008

SAGINAW - Can you enjoy three nutritious meals a day with just \$5.87? That's exactly what about 300 Michigan residents will do this week to bring attention to the effects of poverty and increase donations to local food banks and soup kitchens as part of the Michigan Food Stamp Challenge.

"More than 1.3 million Michigan residents received assistance from the federal food stamp program," Michigan Department of Human Services Director Ismael Ahmed, who is taking the challenge, said at a Saginaw event today. "Hunger is just one of the many devastating effects of poverty."

The food stamp program - known as the Food Assistance Program in Michigan - is part of a safety net for Michigan residents, many of whom work, but still can't make ends meet. Over a million of them will supplement their food budgets this year by visiting a local food bank - and the need is growing. In some parts of the state, emergency food providers are reporting as much as a 25 percent increase in the number of people seeking help with food this year.

That's why Ahmed and about 300 Michigan residents, including Rep. Tim Moore and Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm took the Food Stamp Challenge. Rep. Andy Coulouris and DHS Saginaw County Director Randy Barst took a similar pledge last year. These pledges call attention to the effects of poverty in Michigan and demonstrate the need for increased donations as part of the Michigan Harvest Gathering, an annual event to raise food and funds to support the state's nine regional food banks that serve agencies helping people in all 83 Michigan counties.

The Michigan Food Stamp Challenge encourages people to spend just \$29.35 for food per person in a five-day period, equivalent to the maximum amount a Michigan resident who has no income might receive in food assistance benefits. The minimum amount of benefits is \$14 a month with the average benefit being about \$100 a month. Michigan's Food Assistance Program is designed as a safety net to help ensure people have access to food during difficult economic times. More than half of all recipients are children and 8 percent are over the age of 60.

Food Stamp Challenge participants also have the option of making a donation of time or money to a local food bank or local soup kitchen.

"While the Food Stamp Challenge will be an eye-opening experience for many people," Ahmed said, "it's important to focus our attention on reducing poverty and maximizing economic opportunities for all."

On Nov. 13, policymakers, low-income residents and service providers from across the state will gather at Cobo Center in Detroit for the Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit. They will look for ways to ensure that as Michigan's economy recovers, our poorest citizens are not left behind. This first-of-its-kind summit in Michigan is sponsored by the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Governor's Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity, and the Michigan Community Action Agency Association.

The Poverty Summit is not just a one-day event, but kicks off a statewide initiative to reduce poverty and maximize economic opportunities. After the event, participants will continue to work on regional teams to implement practical solutions to address the needs in the regions where they live.

For more information about the Food Stamp Challenge and the Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit, including registration forms, please visit www.michigan.gov/poverty To donate to the Harvest Gathering, please visit www.feedmichigan.org

Michigan Department of Human Services Media Advisory

Wed., Oct. 15, 2008

Contact: Edward Woods III, director of communications, (517) 373-7394 or (517) 927-1884

Food Stamp Challenge kicks off in Ann Arbor

WHAT: Food Stamp Challenge Kick-off

More than 1.3 million Michigan residents receive food assistance to help supplement their food budgets. The Food Stamp Challenge encourages people to experience what life is like for five days living on the average Michigan food benefit of \$29.35 for the five days, or just less than \$2 per meal.

By partnering with the Michigan Food Bank Council, the challenge promotes the Michigan Harvest Gathering and the upcoming Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit. Policymakers, low-income residents and service providers from across the state will gather at Cobo Center in Detroit for the summit on Nov. 13. Together they will look for ways to ensure that as Michigan's economy recovers, our poorest citizens are not left behind.

WHERE:

Food Gatherers Food Bank
One Carrot Way
Ann Arbor, MI 48113

WHEN:

2 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Thurs., Oct. 16, 2008

WHO:

Ismael Ahmed, director, Michigan Department of Human Services.
Cynthia Travis, director, Washtenaw County Department of Human Services.
Harold Wimberly, program director, Power, Inc., Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative.
Eileen Spring, president and CEO, Food Gatherers.

For more information, please consult the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs or www.michigan.gov/poverty , click on Food Stamp Challenge.